



Nebraska

**State
Rehabilitation
Council**

*“A consumer-controlled council
committed to ensuring quality
rehabilitation services.”*

***Annual Report
1997-1998***

December, 1998

Nebraska State Board of Education
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, NE 68509

To the Citizens of the State of Nebraska:

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is pleased to present to you the 1997-1998 Annual Report.

During the past year, the SRC has been working with **Vocational Rehabilitation** to improve and expand services for individuals with disabilities. This close working relationship has allowed the SRC to provide input into numerous areas that affect all people with disabilities.

As this report indicates, the council has been involved in many areas of Voc Rehab this year, most importantly in the area of transition. Our intense efforts in this area are just a beginning. The information collected regarding how Voc Rehab transition services are currently provided will allow Voc Rehab to improve transition services in the future to better prepare students with disabilities before they enter the workforce.

Other areas of council involvement included:

- Supporting the development of a Statewide Business Advisory Board to identify employment opportunities for **Vocational Rehabilitation** clients;
- Participating in Joint Agency Meetings (JAM) which provide information regarding what services are available to people with disabilities;
- Providing input to **Vocational Rehabilitation** regarding issues such as a vehicle purchase policy, a consumer orientation web page, and training for Voc Rehab employees on the use of PASS plans, IRWE's, and work incentives;
- Showing support to the Legislature for their continued full funding of the Vocational Rehabilitation program;
- Developing an SRC web site on the **Vocational Rehabilitation** homepage so information regarding the SRC and its activities are more accessible to the public.

This council is committed to working in partnership with Nebraska **Vocational Rehabilitation** to identify how services can be improved to better meet the needs of its clients – those individuals with disabilities who are interested in achieving meaningful employment.

Sincerely,

Christine Mimick Keller

Christine Mimick Keller
Chairperson

Overall function of State Rehab Council

Review, analyze, and advise **Vocational Rehabilitation** regarding their performance, including responsibilities relating to:

- ✓ eligibility;
- ✓ order of selection;
- ✓ the extent, scope, and effectiveness of services provided; and
- ✓ functions performed by state agencies that affect or potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes.

In partnership with **Vocational Rehabilitation**, develop, agree to, and review State goals and priorities, and evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program.

Assist in the preparation of the State plan and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations.

To the extent feasible, conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of and consumer satisfaction with:

- ✓ functions performed by the designated State agency;
- ✓ vocational rehabilitation services provided by State agencies and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities; and
- ✓ employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with such employment outcomes.

Prepare and submit an annual report to the State Department of Education on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the state, and make the report available to the public.

To avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of individuals served, coordinate activities with the activities of other councils within the state.

Provide for the coordination and the establishment of working relationships between **Vocational Rehabilitation** and the Statewide Independent Living Council and centers for independent living within the State.

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation accomplishments during fiscal year 1998

The number of Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation consumers who are working competitively increased twenty-four percent over fiscal year 1997.

Transition - In collaboration with our Congressional delegation, Nebraska **Vocational Rehabilitation** achieved changes in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 to more clearly define the role of **Vocational Rehabilitation** as one of planning with schools and students during transition years.

Targeting Industries – **Vocational Rehabilitation** has started developing partnerships with growing businesses that offer many long-term career opportunities, benefits and a living wage. In return, **Vocational Rehabilitation** offers screening, prepared applicants, and follow-along resources. Nebraska Machine Products, Rite Style Optical, and First Data Resources are three examples.

A training model was developed with Marriott Hotels that offers in-depth training and experience in all positions throughout the hotel. Many participants are hired when training is completed. Plans for next year are to expand training to jobs in the Reservation Center.

With banking professionals, **Vocational Rehabilitation** is developing an orientation to banking careers for consumers. Over a period of a few weeks, bankers provide the training and at the conclusion can hire participants.

Process and data modeling of Voc Rehab system - **Vocational Rehabilitation** is creating a new information system. It supports the philosophy that successful rehabilitation incorporates early intervention through Transition, long-term employment and increased career options through an Extended Employment Warranty. This is a clear move away from a time-limited philosophy that considers 90 days of employment as successful rehabilitation.

Vocational Rehabilitation Accomplishments continued

Parent Training Center- Several agencies came together to develop and implement one-day workshops to teach parents and others involved with transition how to access appropriate services when students become adults. They learn about adult service providers in the community, information about planning for the future, how to teach adult responsibility, and how to understand effects of the disability. This project is operating on a three year grant. The first year is funded by Special Education, the Client Assistance Program, the NEAT Center and Mental Health Services, with **Vocational Rehabilitation** being the funding and grant coordinator.

Self-employment program – To address a growing need for self-employment technical assistance, **Vocational Rehabilitation** is developing a program that offers access to consultants. These consultants will address feasibility of the business plan, marketing and financial resources and will offer recommendations. **Vocational Rehabilitation** staff will be able to focus on addressing disability issues.

Solutions on Site – To develop the mobile technology service Solutions on Site, the Assistive Technology Partnership garnered support and financial commitment from **Vocational Rehabilitation**, the Elks of Nebraska, and Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. With specially equipped vans, Technology Specialists travel to underserved areas in the state to address accommodation needs of consumers. Services include assessment, evaluation, referral, and fabrication when ready-made solutions aren't available.

State Rehabilitation Council Committee Reports

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee plays the role of monitoring the progress of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and ensuring its continued involvement and input in the activities of **Vocational Rehabilitation**. In addition to establishing the agenda for each meeting, the committee was involved in the following:

- ✓ participating in the development of the State and Strategic plans before they were reviewed by the SRC;
- ✓ developing the council budget;
- ✓ actively recruiting new members for the SRC in an effort to maintain a broad representation of both disability and statewide involvement;
- ✓ revising the procedure for how council members are appointed to the council by:
 - including the approval of an alternate list of people to fill vacancies as they occur in an effort to be able to respond quickly when a vacancy is created;
 - adding a process for interviewing applicants by the Executive Committee to identify which individuals would best meet the needs of the council.

Legislative Committee

The role of the Legislative Committee is to 1) develop an on-going education process for policymakers on **Vocational Rehabilitation**; and 2) monitor and explore legislation and evaluate the impact it would have on rehabilitation services.

This year, the Legislative Committee wrote letters to the Legislature to express the council's appreciation for appropriating enough state money to **Vocational Rehabilitation** to capture all of the federal funds that are available. Supporting the full funding of Nebraska **Vocational Rehabilitation** will continue to be a priority of this committee.

Committee Reports continued

During the next fiscal year, this committee intends to monitor bills affecting Vocational Rehabilitation and keep the council informed of any legislation on which the council may want to take a position. In addition, the committee will be discussing a change in the council mission statement which would better reflect the change in the council's role required by the 1998 Amendments.

Interagency Outreach Committee

Again this year the Interagency Outreach Committee's work continued to focus on its role of improving communication with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). This Committee recognizes how important the SILC reports, minutes and agendas are to the SRC and how that increases the communication among the councils and the coordination of any activities. This committee will continue to explore the possibility of a joint meeting to discuss a common purpose or agenda.

In an effort to enhance interagency collaborative efforts, the committee also coordinated with the other councils within the state included under the functions of the council in the Rehabilitation Act. The committee identified mutual members from each of the following councils. Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), DD Planning Council, Mental Health Planning Council, and Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). The Interagency Outreach Committee chairperson contacted the chairs of each of the councils and made them aware of the mutual members and their responsibilities in sharing information.

The committee invited various guests to provide presentations to the council. This year, the Assistive Technology Partnership provided information on their new program, Solutions on Site, and a representative from the Developmental Disabilities Division attended another meeting.

Committee Reports continued

The council continues to be a part of the panel for the Joint Agency Meeting (JAM) on disabilities issues. This committee's responsibility is to make sure a member of the council is part of the panel and to provide reports back to the council. These continue to be held throughout the state at various times of the year.

Client Service Delivery Committee

This committee reviews how Vocational Rehabilitation can improve the delivery of services to consumers and addresses consumer satisfaction regarding these services. In the past year, the committee continued to focus on transition, outreach, and employment.

The Client Service Delivery Committee developed and distributed a survey to obtain feedback from parents regarding how to improve transition services for students with disabilities. A total of 2,316 surveys were sent, with 444 returned. The responses of over 400 families involved in transitional services evaluated the effectiveness of **Vocational Rehabilitation's** participation in the planned movement of students with disabilities from school to the world of work. The committee has just started to explore the results of that survey and will make recommendations to **Vocational Rehabilitation** in this area throughout the coming year. Our initial reaction was very positive and it appears that **Vocational Rehabilitation** has made great strides in helping young people with disabilities and their families identify and plan long-term career goals. The committee plans to mail the results of the survey to those who responded. In addition, the information will be broken down by geographical area and provided to the local **Vocational Rehabilitation** offices in an effort to address specific issues.

In terms of outreach, the committee has expressed concern that many individuals with disabilities are not taking advantage of **Vocational Rehabilitation** services. This committee has begun to develop an outreach program aimed at consumers and other agencies that are serving them, which will be recommended to Vocational Rehabilitation for implementation.

Committee Reports continued

Finally, this committee has recommended that **Vocational Rehabilitation** seek input from the business community. Following our recommendations, the agency has begun to develop a network of employers across the state, many of whom have committed to employing people with disabilities.

The Client Service Delivery Committee has indicated it plans to further assess transition services and also the success rate **Vocational Rehabilitation** has with different disabilities. This information could prove invaluable in defining and developing meaningful client services.

Plans for 1999

The State Rehabilitation Council will continue to work with **Vocational Rehabilitation** to improve services to people with disabilities in their efforts to find meaningful employment. The SRC has identified several activities for the upcoming year which include:

- 1) Reviewing the 1998 Amendments and identifying
 - how to meet increased membership requirements.
 - how to serve in more than an “advisory” capacity to **Vocational Rehabilitation**.
- 2) Developing recommendations for changes in transition services as a result of the transition survey.
- 3) Working with **Vocational Rehabilitation** to develop a mentoring system in which former clients of **Vocational Rehabilitation** could advise and support new **Vocational Rehabilitation** clients.
- 4) Providing input to **Vocational Rehabilitation** regarding how the up-front planning process can be modified to ensure more employment success at the end.
- 5) Continuing to invite speakers of other agencies and organizations to present at council meetings in an effort to ensure communication and collaboration.
- 6) Holding a council meeting in another part of the state, in addition to Lincoln.

Statistics

\$13,247,416

earned annually by those entering employment

\$619,872

annual decrease in public assistance payments

10,332

Nebraskans with disabilities received
vocational rehabilitation services

1,333

Nebraskans with disabilities
entered gainful employment

100%

are severely disabled

3,495

new eligible cases

Benefits

The average rehabilitated person returns \$7 to the tax payers for every \$1 spent on his or her rehabilitation.

This table shows the taxes and reduced public assistance in relation to the cost.

Average cost of vocational rehabilitation per person -----		\$14,721
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Annual Earnings following rehabilitation -----		\$11,284
Estimated Annual Taxes on earnings:		
Federal Income Tax -----		\$839
State Income Tax -----		\$275
State/Local Sales Tax -----		\$196
Social Security Tax -----		\$1,749
Average Total Taxes per year -----		\$3,059
Average Reduced Public Assistance for people successfully employed -----		\$528
Total of Taxes + Reduced Public Assistance -----		\$3,587
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Average return to the Tax Payers over 30 remaining years of employment		\$107,610

Employed individuals with disabilities pay taxes. They don't consume them.

State Rehabilitation Council Members

Bob Battreall
North Platte
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Sharon Bloechle
Omaha
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Lind Carey
Norfolk
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Jim Coyle
Omaha
Term Expires: Sept. 1999

Glenda Davis
Omaha
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Alvin Fox
McCool Junction
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Susan Gieschen
Ogallala
Term Expires: Sept. 1999

Josie Johnson
Lincoln
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Christine Keller
Norfolk
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Mitch Miller
Lincoln
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Kris Nolan Brown
Grand Island
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Vicki Rasmussen
Lincoln
On-going term

Jack Shepard
Hastings
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Lloyd Softley
Alliance
Term Expires: Sept. 1999

Dave Temple
Lincoln
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Fred Uehling
Omaha
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Merwyn Vavrina
Lincoln
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Joleen Zabawa
Omaha
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Frank Lloyd, *Ex Officio*
Lincoln
On-going term

Don Crouch
VR Advisor
Lincoln (402-471-3657)

Cathy Callaway
Administrative Assistant
Lincoln (402-471-8663)